

JOHN BURROUGHS

In Remembrance

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John Burroughs in The Nest at Riverby

SERVICES AT THE NEST

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. * * * * * And God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them. * * *

Genesis I

O Lord, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth,
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens!
When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honor—Psalm 8:1, 3-5

The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.

Psalm 19:1-5

* * * Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? * * * But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed * * * for your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matt. 6:25-26; 30-33

GOD OF OUR FATHERS, WE THANK THEE

God of our fathers, God of our children's children,
Thou art our dwelling-place in all generations.
Along the highway of truth our journey's end is ever in
Thy heart.

And though forever go we forth from Thee upon daring
quest, and the far adventures of life,
Yet alway Thou art unto us, by day as an open road, as
friendship fires at eventide.

Reveal Thyself unto us anew in this hour of falling
shadow—

Nay, rather, this hour of lifting light—

Until that which seemeth shadow, shall become the
portals of dawn!

Upon the threshold of our beloved's translation we are
mindful of the multitude of witnesses round about.
A world comes with us to pay tribute eagerly at a shrine
of love.

Little children are here, with woods' flowers in their
hands;

With the morning upon them come the youth of the
nation;

Men and women come, from field and shop, from mart
and office, from home and school and church and
state;

And lo! Help us to listen—What voices these out of
the distances? yesterday and tomorrow, proclaim-
ing tribute!

And Thy voices call to us in this hour,
Thy Voice as the voice of many waters;
Blue of the bending sky; Valley of the River;
Fragrance of arbutus flower, opening under the pine;
Melodious song of the hillside brook;
Swollen torrent roaring down its glen.
How wondrous are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou
made them all.

Teach us to appreciate Thy loving kindness;
To understand Thy benign disposition toward Thy
children;

To know that the world is good.

As when on yonder heights, among the unfading balsams,
our spirits thrilled to the silver bugles of the
mountain veery,

So with Thy still small Voice, sound through our souls
and awaken gratitude!

We thank Thee, O Great Teacher! for our teachers,
Thy living prophets, whom Thou hast sent,—

For delicate fingers feeling their way into the secrets of
life,

For keen eyes seeing distinctly and unafraid,

For minds pure to the mastery of truth;

For brave souls hating a lie.

And above all, O God of the fireside and the social
community!

We thank Thee for neighbor and friend—Amen.

FRANKLIN D. ELMER

In 1915 Mr. Burroughs said to a friend: "When the time comes that I go back to Mother Earth, nothing more appropriate could be read to the gathered friends than these lines:"

Upon this changing globe which blindly moves
Among its kindred in the helpless heavens,
Behold myself—a finite thing, alive,

Blood, marrow, brain, they are but higher names
For common dust, which restless Circumstance
Hath brought together into transient form,
Which acts upon itself, within itself,
Calling its action Life, or Mind or Soul.

Whence came I? Ask the raincloud whence the drop
Which rushes down with millions of its kind.
I know not save that somehow in the slow
And aimless fingers of that Mother All
Which, deaf and blind and dumb, forever toils,
I did appear. And whither shall I go
When in a little while this gathered mass
Which is the Me, shall lose its lineaments
And sink again in that from which, at first
Its outlines woke within the senseless hands?
Ask Night where went the beam that danced upon
The mountain's shoulder when the sun was low!
I was not; I became; and when the time
Hath ripened, I shall but return again
Into that Nothingness which is the All.

About me is the earth, beloved, mine,
The parent, the companion, and the friend;
The forest nods in fellowship; the winds
My playmates are; the waters lisp the sign
Of brotherhood; and in the thunder's voice
I hear a tongue which is not wholly strange.
The stars are kindly councillors to me;
I claim a kinship with the worm that crawls,
And with the clay wherein the simple tale
Of its dim life is written.

When sometimes
The knowledge of the certainty of death
Sits heavily, I do but pause and weigh
That deeper truth—I do not need to care.
My pleasure is the earth's, my pain is hers,

For we are one, and neither time nor change
Can work us injury. I am not all,
I am a part of all, and whether clothed
With flesh and feeling, hurled through lava-heat
Or strewn in that green midnight, miles below
The ruthless tempest and the hungry wave
No evil shall befall me. Neither death,
Nor that succession of eternities
Which is to follow after, can destroy
One atom. In those elemental joys
Which thrill through all the worlds, each scattered part
Shall reap its portion, full as though it lay
As now, in that defined and guarded shape
Which is myself—myself, so closely wrapped
In the sweet fiction called Identity—
That unto which these finite passions cleave
As though it were a thing and not a thought.

What of my duty, that concerning which
My brethren have so much perplexed themselves
And shed each other's blood? It is but this,
That I be mindful of the joys of all
And vigilant against the common pain,
For what my brother suffers or enjoys
So, too, do I, although I know it not.

Thus do I see and know myself, a mould
Of that same sentient and eternal stuff
Whereof this realm, and all the heavens and hells
And that which made, and makes them, is composed.
Loosed from the rude and fretful myths of gods,
Sins, purpose in creation, permanence
Of self, and man's superior origin,
I go my way among the rolling spheres,
Alive and glad, and also unafraid.

Weave on, Blind Mother, at thine awful loom,
With chains of worlds for thread, with endless time,
As needs be, for the fashioning of that
Which never can be finished. Toil thou on
While we, thy careless little ones, rejoice
In that which thou hast done—the wondrous moon
Above the hills, the gentle winds that play
Their ancient games among the talking leaves,

The sunshine and the rain upon the roofs
That shelter those we love; and everything
Within us that is either great or good.

EARL W. WILLIAMS

A POET'S EPITAPH

* * *

But who is He, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

He is retired as moontide dew,
Or fountain in a noon-day grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart,—
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

* * *

WORDSWORTH

THE THRENODY

* * *

Wilt thou not ope thy heart to know
What rainbows teach, and sunsets show?
Verdict which accumulates
From lengthening scroll of human fates,
Voice of earth to earth returned,
Prayers of saints that inly burned,
Saying, *What is excellent,*
As God lives, is permanent;
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;
Heart's love will meet thee again.

EMERSON

THE GATES OF SILENCE

The races rise and fall,
The nations come and go,
Time tenderly doth cover all
With violets and snow.

The mortal tide moves on
To some immortal shore,
Past purple peaks of dusk and dawn
Into the evermore.

I could not see till I was blind,
Then color, music, light,
Came floating down on every wind
And noonday was at night.

I could not feel till I was dead;
Then through the mold and wet
A rose breathed softly overhead,
I heard a violet.

One by one, the gods we know
Weary of our trust,
One by one the prophets go
Dreaming to the dust.

All the cobweb creeds of men
Vanish into air,
Leaving nothing, save a "When?"
Nothing, save a "Where?"

From the dim starry track
Never a man comes back;
Of future weal or woe
Never a man doth know.

Nor you, nor I, nor he,
Can solve the mystery;
Come, let us boldly press
On to the fathomless.

All the tomes of all the tribes,
All the songs of all the scribes,
All that priests and prophets say,
What is it? and what are they?

Fancies futile, feeble, vain,
Idle dream-drift of the brain,—
As of old the mystery
Doth encompass you and me.

* * * *

What star-shod paths lead up to God
We may not know, we may not see:
The highways that the dead have trod
Are curtained close with mystery.

But if this goodly earth and fair
Be token of infinite grace,
Ah, who can dream the glories rare
In store for man's immortal race!

ROBERT LOVEMAN

DAREST THOU NOW, O SOUL!

Darest thou now, O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the foot nor any path to
follow?

No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in
that land.

I know it not, O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible
land.

Till when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bound-
ing us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space, O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to
fulfill, O soul!

WHITMAN

SELECTIONS FROM THE EARLIEST AND LATEST
WRITINGS OF JOHN BURROUGHS

WAITING

Serene I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for winds, nor tide, nor sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time and fate,
For lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays;
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day,
The friends I seek are seeking me;
No wind can drive my bark astray,
Nor change the tide of destiny.

What matter if I stand alone?
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it hath sown,
And garner up its fruit of tears.

The waters know their own, and draw
The brook that springs in yonder heights;
So flows the good with equal law
Unto the soul of pure delights.

The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave comes to the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.

JOHN BURROUGHS

We are a part of the wave of energy that sweeps through the cosmos, as truly as the drops of the sea hold and convey the tidal impulse. We know, or think we know, the sources of this tidal impulse, but the attraction between earth and moon and sun is reciprocal—a give-and-take process—and is only a phase of the sum total (if the Infinite can be said to have a sum total) of the energy of the cosmos.

The magnet and magnetism are one. If you melt or pulverize the magnet, you dissipate, but do not destroy the magnetism. The clouds come and go; now we see them, and then there is only blue sky where they were. Change, but not destruction. When the thunder-cloud disperses, where are its terrible bolts? Withdrawn, probably, or redistributed into the inmost recesses of matter or of the ether. The energy of the human brain and body cannot be destroyed by death, only changed. If consciousness is a force, then it, too, must persist.
* * * *

The laws of life and death are as they should be. The laws of matter and force are as they should be; and if death ends my consciousness, still is death good. I have had life on those terms, and somewhere, somehow, the course of nature is justified. I shall not be imprisoned in that grave where you are to bury my body. I shall be diffused in great Nature, in the soil, in the air, in the sunshine, in the hearts of those who love me, in all the living and flowing currents of the world, though I may never again in my entirety be embodied in a single human being. My elements and my forces go back into the original sources out of which they came, and these sources are perennial in this vast, wonderful, divine cosmos. (From "Accepting the Universe").

JOHN BURROUGHS





C. B. PIETRO. SCULPTOR.

The Seer

SERVICES AT THE GRAVE

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of
righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow
of death
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. * * * *

Psalm 23

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with
peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before
you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall
clap their hands.

Isaiah 55, 12.

“GOD OF OUR FATHERS, WE THANK THEE”

Read as at previous service

SONG OF MYSELF

* * *

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at
the crowded heaven,

And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders
of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of
everything in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied
then?*

And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and
continue beyond.*

* * * * *

WHITMAN

THE STILL TREES

I thank you, Elm and Beech, and all my friends
That live so wisely on the happy hills,
I thank you for your silence. Even a friend—
Especially a friend—must have his moods,
His long still days of dreaming silence, spent
In strange communion with his soul and God.
And you, my friends, have chosen for your silence
The slow lean months of winter. All the burdens
And all the joys of this embattled earth
You dare forget, so that your soul and God
May have their hour of studious solitude.
So I, O friends, who walk among you now,
Go searching inward to the soul in me,
And bend my dreams unto the God we know.
I thank you, Elm and Beech, and all my friends
That live so wisely on the happy hills.

JOHN RUSSELL MCCARTHY

YOUTH

There's a spirit bends the maple, makes it beckon like
a hand,
Makes it murmur in a language that my heart can
understand;
They will sing their song together—April's spirit and
my heart—
Out beyond the merry foothills, where the giant
mountains start.

There's a yellow on the highroad that is gold enough
for me,
And the wine of April's showers is as clear as it is
free,
See it sparkle in the sunshine? And beyond the
breathing hills
Lies the prize of hope and striving—youth demands
and life fulfills.

JOHN RUSSELL MCCARTHY

TO JOHN BURROUGHS

Thou who art eyes and ears for all,
And loving heart,
What loneliness on us will fall
When thou depart.

That year unheralded the spring
Will weeping come,
With halting footsteps bring
Why thou art dumb.

I think the very streams will know
That thou art gone,
And full of heavy sorrow flow
More slowly on.

A hush will fall upon the wood
When thou dost sleep,
And birds bereft their lover, brood
In silence deep.

And though thy pinions broader sweep
Than eagle's wing,
Thou'lt see how we, too, dumbly weep
And cannot sing.

MAY MORGAN

TO JOHN BURROUGHS

(On his eighty-third birthday, April 3, 1920)

When you were born on that April day
Up on the hillside, Roxbury way,
A violet peeped from the springing sod,
A robin carolled a song of God;
And Nature laughed—"What a wondrous thing—
Little John has come, so it must be spring!"

The flowers and song-birds, Ah, they knew
The love that lay in the heart of you!
So they helped you live, and they watched you grow
In the simple way of long ago,
Blossoming and singing near you at play,
They companioned the boy up Roxbury way.

And we, your friends, who have loved you long,
Envy the robin his birthday song;
Envy the violet in the grass
Springing to welcome you as you pass,
So take the song and the violet blue
As being our proxies of love to you,
And wherever you bide in the coming years
We will call to you when the spring appears.

JEAN DWIGHT FRANKLIN

JOHN BURROUGHS CALLED BACK

In glorious hour the great soul passed,
And he will find his own at last
Upon the edge of April, while
The earth is quickening, mile by mile,
His young soul, thrilled by the mysterious breath
Goes singing through the doors of death.

He who was comrade to the herds,
He who was brother to the birds,
He who had all the flowers for friends
Has gone the road that never ends.
Crowned with his golden lore he goes
While earth is dreaming of the rose;
And as he passes he can hear
The far song of the flowering year.

While grasses hurry into earth
He rises to his higher birth,
Where Audubon and Jefferies are
Exploring nature in their star—
Where Ruskin, lover of old roads,
And Turner, have their bright abodes,
He goes and round his head is hurled
The April vision of the world:
He carries as his feet depart,
The warm love of the whole earth's heart.

EDWIN MARKHAM

JOHN BURROUGHS

Who would not envy him the years
As he has turned them page by page
Of Nature's wonder-book? Who fears
To climb with him the Hills of Age?

When he has found their summits yield
But wider views of all things good—
More of the beauty of the field,
More of the magic of the wood?

The wheeling sun, the wakening earth,
Nest-time and seed-time in his mind
Gained fairer meaning, higher worth,
He taught new vision to the blind.

Glad hearing to the silent ears
Till in the meadows every spring,
They sense the music of the spheres
When bobolinks begin to sing.

I think where'er he rests the place
Will be the robin's safe retreat;
The winter snow will bear the trace
Of small four-footed pilgrims' feet.

Surely these hills of his will know
And not forget who gave them voice;
The field and roadside flowers will grow
Close to the Lodge, and birds rejoice

To nest above his door, or where—
A bearded birch tree on the rocks,
Wind-blown— he scans the Delaware,
And marks the turning equinox.

Thus, then, we see him— staunch with age,
Young as the year's eternal spring—
The Seer, the Poet, and the Sage
Discerning good in everything.

Watching the quiet tide of days
Untroubled by its slow decrease,
He stands amid the Eternal Ways
Secure that all leads on to peace.

Content to wait with quiet hands
Until his own shall come— for he
Sees through the veil, and understands;
And seeing, teaches us to see!

CHARLES BUXTON GOING

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

Now I lay me down to sleep
By the rock where I shall keep
My tryst with Mother Earth.

Shed not for me a single tear,
But gladly leave my body here
To find its second birth.

Seek me in each living thing,
Hear my voice with birds of spring,
And in the singing brook.

Dear ones who have come today,
My life's love shall with you stay
Through the coming years.

Be ye real and be ye true,
Do the work that comes to you
Joyously and well.

Leave me now and let me lie—
To live again I had to die:
Let Nature have her way.

GRACE DAVIS VANAMEE

REQUIEM

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
*Here he lies where he longed to be,
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

AT CLOSE OF DAY

Guarding rock and brooding sky,
Hill whereon the red kine lie,
Welcome to earth's vernal breast
Him who cometh here to rest.

Songs of northward-winged birds
Be this hour's most fitting words;
Mounting sun and spreading light,
Symbol thou this spirit's flight.

Earth, sweet mother of our race,
In thy warm heart make his place;
He who trod thy starry way
Cometh home at close of day.

FRANK TALBOT

THE SOUL'S RETURN

There is one spot for which my soul will yearn,
May it but come where breeze and sunlight play,
And leaves are glad; from the dark realm return;
A waif—a presence borne on kindly ray—
Even thus, if but beneath the same blue sky!
The grazing kine not then will see me cross
The pasture slope; the swallows will not shy,
Nor brooding thrush; blithe bees the flowers will
toss:
Not the faint thistle-down *my* breath may charm.
Ah, me! But I shall find the dear ways old,
If I have leave; that sheltered valley farm;
Its climbing woods, its spring, the meadow's gold;
The creek-path, dearest to my boyhood's feet—
Oh, God! is there another world so sweet?

MYRON B. BENTON



Services were held at The Nest at Riverby, West Park-on-the-Hudson, April 2, 1921, the Reverend Franklin D. Elmer and other friends reading the selections. "Remembrance" (Pinsuti) and "The Cradle Song" (Brahms) opened and closed the services.

On the following day, the anniversary of the eighty-fourth birthday, services were held at the grave by the Boyhood Rock near Woodchuck Lodge, at Roxbury-in-the-Catskills. The music of the preceding day was repeated.

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